



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

Iraq's neighbors are playing a major role—both positive and negative—in the country's worsening crisis. As part of the Institute's Iraq and Its Neighbors project, a group of leading specialists on the geopolitics of the region is assessing the interests and influence of the countries surrounding Iraq and the impact on U.S. bilateral relations. The Institute is also sponsoring high-level, nonofficial dialogue between Iraqi national security and foreign policy officials and their counterparts from the neighboring countries. The Marmara Declaration, released after the Institute's most recent dialogue in Istanbul, sets forth a framework for a regional peace process. Jon Alterman's report on the Gulf States is the fifth in a series of special reports sponsored by the Iraq and Its Neighbors project; Steve Simon's study on Syria will be published in the coming months. Scott Lasensky, senior research associate at the Institute's Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention and adjunct professor of government at Georgetown University, directs the Iraq and Its Neighbors project and authored the report on Jordan. Peter Pavlouros is the series editor. For more information about the Iraq and Its Neighbors project, go to [www.usip.org/iraq/neighbors/index.html](http://www.usip.org/iraq/neighbors/index.html).

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

## IRAQ AND ITS NEIGHBORS

*Jon B. Alterman*

# Iraq and the Gulf States



## The Balance of Fear

### Summary

- Iraq's Persian Gulf neighbors supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq in order to preserve the status quo—a weak and self-absorbed Iraq—rather than to impose a new one. However, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and its aftermath have not brought stability to the Gulf States as much as they have shifted the most serious challenges from external threats (of a hostile Baghdad) to internal threats (the threat of conflict spillover from Iraq).
- Kuwait fears the growth of Iranian influence in Iraq and the possibility that Iraqi Shia unrest will spill across its own borders. Although many Kuwaitis question the wisdom and capacity of the United States in managing Iraq's internal problems, Kuwait has provided significant support to U.S. military action in Iraq and the country's reconstruction efforts.
- Qatar has supported U.S. military actions in Iraq by hosting the U.S. Central Command but still maintains the perception of nonalignment. For example, Doha hosts prominent former Iraqi Baathists, not to mention Saddam's own family members.
- The interest of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Iraq is secondary to its concern over Iran, with which it has a long-standing dispute over ownership of three islands in the Gulf. The unresolved dispute with Tehran over the islands heightens the UAE's concerns about the rising Iranian influence in Iraq.
- To bolster its relationship with the United States, the UAE offered training to hundreds of Iraqi troops and police recruits in 2004–2005, hosted the first Preparatory Group Meeting for the International Compact with Iraq in September 2006, and

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The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, non-partisan institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote post-conflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict-management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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funded reconstruction efforts in Iraq through the United Nations and the World Bank.

- On post-Saddam regional security issues, member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) seem to be more “market takers” than “market makers,” showing little inclination to shape the nature of a larger and potentially more powerful neighbor. Instead, they are focused on immediate choices for calibrating a proper relationship with Washington in a way that accommodates many other important relationships.

## Introduction

It would seem intuitive that Iraq’s smaller Gulf Arab neighbors—Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman—would want the country’s transition to a stable and peaceful order to succeed. Long fearful of Saddam Hussein and the instability he caused, the region could breathe easier and concentrate on urgent domestic issues with his removal. Indeed, in the months preceding the U.S.-led assault on Iraq, Gulf leaders were widely reported to have urged the Bush administration to take forceful action against Iraq, with the proviso that it should also be swift so as to avoid too many ripples throughout the region.<sup>1</sup>

In the years following the fall of Saddam, however, regional instability has increased in many ways, rather than diminished. Instead of facing the threat of Saddam’s army and his missiles, Iraq’s Arab neighbors now face starker challenges. For many, their populations are enraged by their governments’ close cooperation with the United States, and the prospect of a new generation of well-trained and highly networked jihadi fighters returning home looms on the horizon. Sectarian rivalries flare anew, and Shia-Sunni tensions are higher than at any time since the Iranian Revolution more than a quarter-century ago. In addition, Iran’s ascending influence in Iraq and more broadly in the region has made many uneasy. The fall of Saddam Hussein has not brought an end to the fears of Iraq’s Arab neighbors. In many ways, the fall of Saddam has merely shifted those fears. In some cases, Saddam’s fall has even intensified them.

Indeed, for many of Iraq’s smaller neighbors, fear motivates governments more than hope. They are afraid of what the future might bring, yet uncertain how to help shape its course. Their fear often drives them into the arms of the United States, which alone among world powers can protect them from regional aggression. The collapse of Saddam’s armies has not lessened these governments’ reliance on the United States—Iran’s rise swiftly followed Iraq’s demise. What it has done, however, is make the governments acutely aware of the fact that they are at the mercy of U.S. policies—toward Iran, toward Iraq, and more broadly—over which they have little influence, let alone control.

Although events in Iraq raise anger and despair among the country’s neighbors, they have also reinforced the centrality of the United States to the neighbors’ security considerations. Saddam Hussein’s removal did not mean more freedom for the crafters of foreign policy in the Gulf States. Instead, it made their basic predicament clearer, and it diminished their hopes for a more favorable order in the region.

At the outset, the Bush administration’s ambitions in Iraq enjoyed only partial support among Iraq’s smaller neighbors. This coolness was not because the neighbors had any regard for Iraq’s government but, rather, because the Bush administration trumpeted how “inspirational” a new regime in Iraq would be to Arabs living under tyranny. “A liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region, by bringing hope and progress into the lives of millions,”<sup>2</sup> he told a friendly audience at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington a month before the U.S.-led assault. Bush left unspoken the fact that many of the millions who would be so inspired live under the thumb of governments

allied to the United States. Those governments' cooperation would be vital to both wage the war and manage the consequences afterward.

The rhetoric of the administration's supporters outside of government heightened those governments' concerns still further by loudly proclaiming how deposing Saddam Hussein would spread positive political ripples throughout the Middle East. For some, the demonstration of U.S. resolve would intimidate America's foes, "making them recalculate the odds of defying a power that has demonstrated its intention to remain a permanent and dynamic regional player."<sup>3</sup> Others were blunter still. Former CIA director R. James Woolsey told an audience at the University of California, Los Angeles, just after Saddam fell, "We will scare, for example, the Mubarak regime in Egypt, or the Saudi royal family, thinking about this idea that these Americans are spreading democracy in this part of the world. They will say, 'You make us very nervous.' And our response should be, 'Good. We want you nervous. We want you to realize that now, for the fourth time in one hundred years, this country and its allies are on the march, and that we are on the side of those whom you, the Mubaraks, the Saudi royal family, most fear. We are on the side of your own people.'"<sup>4</sup>

As far as the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) were concerned, they just wanted Saddam Hussein gone.<sup>5</sup> He had been their client, balancing against Iran in the 1980s, but his move against Kuwait in 1990 revealed him as a menace. However, their interest in an American "success"—especially the way the U.S. government defined "success" and its consequences—was limited at best. As a group, Iraq's neighbors did not want a strong and democratic Iraq to emerge as a beacon of freedom to the region; an "inspirational" Iraq could cause insurrection from within their countries. Even more ominously, Iraq had long harbored aspirations of being a regional hegemon. And even though those ambitions were thwarted by two ruinous wars and international isolation, a fully rehabilitated Iraq could take advantage of its large population and vast oil wealth to redress a long series of regional grievances, from borders to debts to oil production agreements. The interests of neighboring governments would be much better served by an Iraq that remained relatively weak, too consumed by infighting to threaten its neighbors and too mired in its own dysfunctional politics to inspire nearby populations.

In essence, these neighboring governments signed on for the military side of the U.S. effort, but not the political one. Granting the U.S. military basing and overflight rights, support for reconnaissance operations, refueling, and other operational functions helped maintain these countries' alliances with the U.S. government. Yet these governments supported U.S. efforts in order to preserve the status quo—a weak and self-absorbed Iraq—rather than impose a new one. These governments have little interest in catastrophic failure in Iraq, but their interest in the broader goals that the U.S. government has articulated has been similarly limited. Long used to managing tensions in far from ideal conditions, the leaders of the countries neighboring Iraq have supported U.S. war efforts as a quest for stability, not radical positive change.<sup>6</sup>

It is perhaps surprising to Iraq's Gulf neighbors, then, that U.S. actions in Iraq have not brought stability so much as shifted the most serious challenges most of them face from external to internal threats. Counterterrorism cooperation drives many of these countries closer to an alliance with the United States, which also offers their only real protection against invasion or threats from regional rivals. Still, much of the bilateral partnership remains hidden. On a public level, events in Iraq have driven most governments in the region to distance themselves from the United States and express concern that U.S. actions are harmful to their interests.<sup>7</sup>

In many ways, the states considered here are quite similar. Rich in oil, small in population, and eager for security, they seek many of the same things. They all follow different paths to achieve them, however, guided by their unique locations, concerns, and ideas for their relationship with the United States.

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## "Oil Security" on the Iraq-Kuwait Border

"Project Kuwait" is an \$8.5 billion plan announced in 1997 by the Kuwaiti government to try to boost the country's oil production level by about 900,000 barrels a day (bbl/d). Presently, Kuwait produces around 2.7 million bbl/d, mostly from its mature Burgan field—the world's second-largest—and other fields in the country's south, all of whose production levels have been tapering off in the past several years. The government's plan attempts to raise the country's oil production—which accounts for 90–95 percent of Kuwait's total export earnings and around 40 percent of gross domestic product—to 4 million bbl/d by 2020 by tapping less accessible yet promising fields in the north of the country—specifically, Sabriyah, Raudhatain, Abduhi, and Ratqa (see graphic below).

The government plan, which was formulated by the state-owned Kuwait Oil Company, has sparked considerable controversy in Kuwait for its involvement of international oil companies (IOCs) in "upstream" production arrangements at the northern fields. Kuwait nationalized its oil sector in 1975, and the emirate's constitution prohibits foreign ownership or control of Kuwait's oil assets. Indeed, at the center of the dispute between the government and the legislature is the question of control, and the plan for foreign participation has had to balance the government's need to make participation attractive enough for the IOCs to invest, and the legislature's concerns about IOCs' encroaching on Kuwait's sovereignty through standard production-sharing agreements, in which IOCs retain a portion of the oil they extract.

Kuwaitis acknowledge that the success of "Project Kuwait" relies on consortia of international oil firms that have the upstream technology and expertise to extract the geologically challenging reserves of heavy, "sour" (more sulphurous) crude from the northern fields, as opposed to Burgan's and other southern fields' light, sweet crude; yet they are also concerned that opening up Kuwait's state-controlled petroleum sector to foreign firms could leave the country vulnerable to upstream control and the loss of sovereignty over its principal export commodity.

For nearly a decade, the government has been pushing the plan in the Kuwaiti legislature, which has been circumspect in its consideration of any part of the plan that admits foreign ownership or control of the country's oil and thus requires a legislative exception. Kuwait's national oil company has sought to allay the National Assembly's concerns by fashioning the plan with "incentivized buy-back contracts" that offer IOCs a per-barrel price instead of concessions or "booked" reserves under typical production-sharing agreements. The government introduced the revised legislation in the National Assembly in June 2005, and the Finance and Economic Committee approved an amended bill for debate by the full legislature. The dissolution of the National Assembly in May 2006, followed by new

(continued next page)

## Kuwait

Among the Gulf States, Kuwait is the most unabashed supporter of the policies of the United States in Iraq. The United States liberated the country from Saddam Hussein in 1991, and its support gives vital comfort to a small but wealthy country sandwiched between the two larger states of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In 1938, 1961, and again in 1990, Iraqi leaders publicly asserted that Kuwait is not, by rights, an independent state, but merely Iraq's nineteenth province.<sup>8</sup> Iraq's long-asserted interests involve not only the Rumaila oil field, which straddles the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, but also Iraq's desire to expand its narrow Persian Gulf shoreline so as to improve shallow sea lanes and expand its shipping capacity. As recently as 2006, a Kuwaiti academic observed that Iraqis' repeating such a claim "Is not a matter of 'if,' but 'when.'"<sup>9</sup>

## After Saddam: Threat Perceptions and Interests in Iraq

For more than a decade after Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion, Kuwaitis lived in mortal fear of another attack from Iraq. The downfall of the Iraqi Baathist regime in 2003 allowed many Kuwaitis to breathe easier, because the principal external threat to the country had evaporated. As violence mars the future picture for Iraq, and as the memory of Saddam Hussein recedes, Kuwaitis still face two fears from beyond their borders.

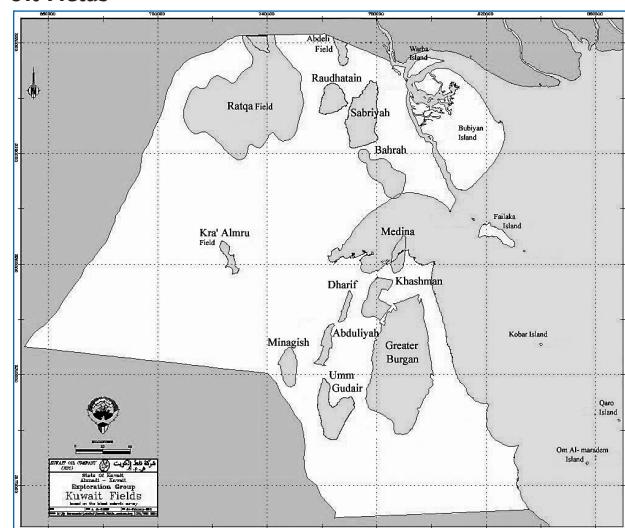
The first is the threat from a potentially nuclear-armed Iran. While Iran's relations with Kuwait are not hostile, as a small country Kuwait fears the growing influence of a regional neighbor, especially one with special ties to Kuwait's Shia population (reported as somewhere between 15 and 30 percent of the total).

Kuwait's other fear is that Iraqi Shia unrest will spill over into Kuwait, either through heightening sectarian strife or from the establishment of a hostile, Iranian-influenced Shia state—or quasi-state—in the south of Iraq. As one Kuwaiti journalist put it in an informal conversation, "We don't want Iran just fifty miles away."<sup>10</sup> The memory of 1985, when a Shia militant attempted to assassinate the Kuwaiti emir, heightens Kuwaiti concerns about a Shia fifth column in the country.<sup>11</sup>

The fear of potential sectarian strife highlights the extent to which Kuwaitis now worry less about armies crossing their borders and more about conflict arising *within* those borders. Although a windfall from high oil prices, combined with a soaring stock market, has raised many Kuwaitis' standards of living, there is a doggedly persistent violent Islamist movement in the country, especially in tribal areas. While the threat level remains far below that of Saudi Arabia, several attacks against Western military personnel occur every year in Kuwait.<sup>12</sup>

Groups associated with al Qaeda are sporadically active in Kuwait, stockpiling arms and explosive devices, and occasionally clashing with police;<sup>13</sup> how much these clashes represent these groups' death rattle or a growth spurt is unclear. Moreover, some elements of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq have tried or succeeded in entering Kuwait to commit acts of retribution against the government or to try to attack

## Oil Fields



Source: Kuwait Oil Company

U.S. forces based in the country.<sup>14</sup> To combat extremism in the country, the government is exerting more control over preaching in mosques and is trying Kuwaiti and Egyptian clerics for inciting youth to fight in jihad in Iraq;<sup>15</sup> it is also boosting police and intelligence efforts to combat armed groups. Most Kuwaitis dismiss the idea that such militancy can threaten the government's survival. Still, the persistence of these groups is part of a larger challenge of managing the expectations of a disaffected young population, whose desires for economic security, meaningful work, and a voice in controlling their own lives increase perhaps even more rapidly than the government's growing ability to satisfy them.

As Kuwait confronts the dangers of sectarian strife in its troubled neighbor, the growth of Iranian influence next door, and the potential for a greater "spillover" effect from Iraq, Kuwait has provided significant support to U.S. military action in Iraq and the country's reconstruction efforts.

### ***Cooperation with the United States on Iraq***

It is not an exaggeration to say that Kuwait exists today because of the efforts of the U.S. military. The Kuwaiti government has not forgotten this fact, as shown by its open support for U.S. military efforts in Iraq. Kuwait maintains ten U.S. bases on its soil and reportedly hosts approximately 20,000 U.S. soldiers at any given time. The rapidly expanding Camp Arifjan, located south of Kuwait City, is the main staging ground for all Coalition troops in Iraq.<sup>16</sup> The facility replaces Camp Doha, the hastily erected, temporary base that the U.S. military built after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Arifjan is designed as a permanent facility, and it is sprouting a variety of permanent structures—from lodging to covered storage for pre-positioned materiel. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Kuwait emerged as a vital transshipment point for weapons and soldiers, and as a staging ground for international forces. Although Kuwait cedes the regional command-and-control role to Qatar, which hosts the U.S. Central Command headquarters in the Persian Gulf, there is no government that is as unambiguously supportive of U.S. military goals in the Gulf as Kuwait. To defray the cost to the United States of maintaining troops in the country, Kuwait heavily subsidizes the oil and gasoline that U.S. troops in the region use. The U.S. Department of Energy reports that Kuwait donated about \$350 million in assistance in primary fuel to aid the U.S. war efforts in Iraq.<sup>17</sup> Kuwait has doggedly sought to deepen its bilateral relationship with the United States, having been awarded "Major Non-NATO Ally" status in 2004.<sup>18</sup> In ways formal and informal, the Kuwaiti government makes its support of U.S. needs and objectives clear, and the government is extraordinarily reluctant to criticize either the United States or the U.S. president. Thus, unsurprisingly, Kuwait has been less vocal about its concerns over the American strategy in Iraq compared to fellow GCC members.

The Kuwaiti position on U.S. policies in Iraq is partly a consequence of feeling betrayed by other Arab states when Saddam Hussein invaded in 1990. Kuwaitis' lingering feelings that their Arab brethren abandoned them in the First Gulf War have caused them, more than the citizens of any other Arab country (save Libya), to question openly the meaning or utility of an Arab identity. Consequently, they are often more skeptical of pan-Arab proclamations and much more supportive of a close relationship with the United States. Thus Kuwait made clear its eagerness to cooperate with the United States in deposing Saddam Hussein even before the war, and Kuwaiti support has been consistent throughout.

### ***Reconstruction and Debt Relief***

Not only was Kuwait in the lead supporting the U.S.-led invasion, but Kuwaiti businessmen aggressively sought to promote investment in post-Saddam Iraq, and the government established a fund of almost \$1 billion for investment there.<sup>19</sup> However, Kuwait's diminutive size and bitter legacy with Iraq have inhibited most Kuwaitis from taking a more

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elections and committee assignments the next month has prolonged the debate over the bill.

Project Kuwait also sparks controversy on the other side of the border, in Iraq. The northern Kuwaiti fields—particularly Ratqa and Abdeli—straddle or abut the Iraqi border, which remains a contentious issue: Despite Iraq's formal recognition of the UN-demarcated border between Iraq and Kuwait following the First Gulf War, Kuwait's attempts to build a permanent border-marking fence have sparked at least two clashes between Kuwaiti workers and Iraqi protesters, most recently in Iraq's port city of Um Qasr. After Iraqi forces were ejected from Kuwait in the First Gulf War, the UN Boundary Commission granted Kuwait's desire to move its border a little more than one-third of a mile northward, a move that places the southern tip of Iraq's Rumaila oil field on the Kuwaiti side of the border—specifically, in the middle of Project Kuwait's Ratqa field. UN Security Council Resolution 833 (1993) reaffirmed the granting to Kuwait of some territory that previously had been on the Iraqi side of the border, but only for technical purposes of accurately marking the border. Yet Iraqi protesters claim that Kuwait is moving beyond the UN border commission's demarcation, encroaching on Iraqi territory, and some Iraqi commentators have suggested that such encroachments are preliminary moves to claim more surface territory to drill for oil that straddles the border. (One of Saddam Hussein's *casus belli* against Kuwait in the First Gulf War pertained to Kuwait's "horizontal drilling" through the Abdeli field.) In the UN's 1992 border demarcation, the status of crossborder oil fields was unresolved, but in September 2006, Iraq's oil minister announced that his country would sign agreements with Kuwait, Syria, and Iran regarding the development of joint oil fields; three months later, Kuwaiti and Iraqi officials said that they planned to hold talks over the status of their crossborder fields.

Some observers speculate that the Kuwaiti government's attempt to engage international oil companies in developing the country's northern oil fields adds new meaning to the term "oil security." Top Kuwaiti officials view "Project Kuwait" as the country's attempt to seek international—and, in particular, U.S.—recognition of its rights to the disputed oil fields and as way of creating a de facto "security zone" with its northern neighbor. Whatever the motives behind Kuwait's proposed plan to develop the crossborder fields, the issue will almost certainly shape the dynamics of Iraq-Kuwait relations, particularly with respect to Kuwait's forgiving Iraq's debt and its prospective natural gas imports from Iraq. —USIP Staff

**Sources:** Middle East Report, Summer 2002; *Oil, Gas, and Energy Law Intelligence*, March 2003; *Alexander's Gas and Oil Connections*, November 27, 2003; *The Middle East*, December 2005 and July 2006; MENAFN, "Iraq to Develop Joint Oil Fields with Kuwait, Syria, and Iran," September 18, 2006; Energy Information Administration, Country Analysis Briefs, "Kuwait," November 2006.

active role in Iraqi reconstruction. Indeed, Kuwaitis are still consumed by their need to rebuild their own country after Iraq's 1990 invasion. Kuwait's capacity to help may also be somewhat limited outside the financial realm. There is a long history of suspicion between the two countries, and Iraqis still resent what they have historically perceived as Kuwaitis' air of cultural superiority. In addition, Kuwait's reliance on expatriates for both manual labor and professionals in crucial sectors of the economy, and its relatively limited native private sector outside of trading establishments, suggest that Kuwait is better placed to help coordinate and facilitate Iraqi reconstruction by third countries than to lead it.

Nonetheless, Kuwait has managed to provide a notable contribution to Iraq's reconstruction. Kuwait runs a humanitarian operations center that by May 2005 had provided \$450 million in assistance to Iraqis since the fall of the Iraqi Baathist regime.<sup>20</sup> In October 2003, Kuwait announced at the Madrid donors' conference that it had spent \$1 billion on Iraq, pledging an additional \$500 million in aid to the Iraqi government, although it remains unclear exactly how much of that pledge has been disbursed.<sup>21</sup> Kuwait has also pledged an additional \$65 million in aid to Iraq, bringing its total pledge of reconstruction aid to \$565 million as of June 2006.<sup>22</sup> A Kuwaiti official said in June 2006 that his country is providing Iraq with a significant volume of fuel to help it overcome its shortages; it has also been reported that Iraqi oil workers have been trained within Kuwaiti oil installations.<sup>23</sup>

Kuwaiti businessmen were among the first over the border looking for investments in Iraq. Although the country has not formally forgiven Iraq's debt, few expect any forthcoming effort to collect it. In January 2004, the Kuwaiti government promised U.S. envoy James A. Baker III that it would write off a substantial amount of the \$25 billion Iraqi debt to Kuwait, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice raised the same issue in a recent trip to the region.<sup>24</sup> It is likely that Kuwait has not moved ahead with writing off Iraq's debts in order to extract concessions from Baghdad on energy deals and finalizing the fate of Kuwaiti prisoners of war from the 1990 invasion.

More than any other country in the Gulf, Kuwait acts as if it is a small boat tossed at sea: The country is trapped between two large and sometimes difficult neighbors, and it remains uneasy. The only way it has any strategic depth at all is to rely on U.S. forces to protect it, yet Kuwaitis often express frustration that they have little control over what the United States does in the region or how the Gulf fits into U.S. strategy. Kuwaitis are clearly less influential in U.S. policy than the wealthier and more numerous Saudis to the south; hence, Kuwaitis feel more vulnerable.

The difficulties the United States has faced in Iraq have made many Kuwaitis question both the wisdom and capacity of their most important ally, and such doubts occur precisely at a time that Kuwaitis are becoming preoccupied with potential threats from Iran. Although Kuwaitis fully appreciate that there is no alternative to the United States in providing the country with strategic depth, there is far less enthusiasm for the bilateral relationship than there was five years ago. In addition, rising awareness of other global powers such as China—which one Foreign Ministry official informally observed has “positive positions on Arab issues”—suggests a desire to supplement reliance on the United States with strengthened ties to other countries.<sup>25</sup>

## **Qatar**

Compared to Kuwait, Qatar takes a more ambivalent stance about its cooperation with U.S. military operations in Iraq, often seeking cooperation on the one hand while, on the other hand, maintaining the perception of nonalignment.

### ***Qatar's Threat Perceptions and the Great Balancing Game***

Prior to Sheikh Hamad's ascendance as head of the emirate in 1995, Qatar did not play a central role in Persian Gulf politics. Achieving independence only in 1972, Qatar was nei-

ther large enough nor wealthy enough to command attention. The previous emir, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani (Sheikh Hamad's father), cautiously allowed allied forces to launch airstrikes against Iraq from Qatari soil in 1991, but it was the discovery of large amounts of natural gas in Qatar that same year that transformed the country's strategic position in the Gulf.

Although Qatar does not fear invasion from its only bordering neighbor, Saudi Arabia, it has had somewhat strained relations with the Saudi kingdom—especially since 1995, when Sheikh Hamad seized power by deposing his father in a bloodless coup. Reportedly, Saudis continue to back Sheikh Hamad's rivals, seeking to keep him in check and perhaps threaten his hold on power.<sup>26</sup>

In the past decade, the country has sought to strengthen its internal position and to hold Saudi Arabia at bay by building an even closer relationship with the United States. In the late 1990s, when U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia became increasingly controversial in that country, the Qatari government began to lay the groundwork to station permanent U.S. bases in Qatar. Sheikh Hamad reportedly told U.S. officials that he hoped to host 10,000 U.S. soldiers in the country permanently.<sup>27</sup> The Saudis' 2001 refusal to allow U.S. forces to fly combat missions in Afghanistan from Saudi bases confirmed this trend: That same year came the establishment of a U.S. base south of Doha to compensate for strictures over the U.S. use of Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia and, further, the relocation to Qatar of the U.S. military's Combined Air Operations Center (with responsibility for counterterror air operations over Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, and leadership of the air campaign over Iraq in April 2003). The center has since grown into a multibillion dollar project; at the same time, the United States has removed its personnel from the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia and has turned it over to complete Saudi control.

On a different front, Qatar has also sought to carve out an identity as a progressive country in the region. Its rulers speak frequently about democracy and promote the small state—with a citizenry that probably numbers less than 150,000—as a model for development. Qatar has also invested huge amounts of money in becoming a regional education center, partnering with major American universities such as Cornell, Texas A&M, Georgetown, Virginia Commonwealth, and others to establish interactive educational facilities in Doha.

For all its commitment to turn to the United States for military protection and educational advancement, however, Qatar is far from being a U.S. puppet. More important, al-Jazeera has become a significant foreign policy tool for the Qatari government. The aggressive news coverage of al-Jazeera has proved a useful irritant in Qatar's relations with the United States and with its Arab neighbors. It is perhaps particularly ironic that the fiercest critics of al-Jazeera in the U.S. administration—generally among top officials in the Department of Defense—are also among those who are most dependent on Qatar's support for the U.S. strategic posture in the region. U.S. officials have complained bitterly about al-Jazeera's airing of tapes from Osama bin Laden, as well as its news coverage of the Coalition's war against Iraq and of the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>28</sup>

Al-Jazeera's role here is remarkably artful. The Qatari government professes an inability to control what the station airs, yet the government's clear support for the station (with tens of millions of dollars in annual subsidies<sup>29</sup>), combined with persistent reports of royal engagement on strategic issues at the station, suggests considerable government influence over the station's programming. What al-Jazeera provides Qatar is a useful degree of distance from the United States while providing the government deniability at the same time. As one writer put it, "al-Jazeera, although functionally independent, could be said to indirectly serve the foreign policy goals of Qatar."<sup>30</sup> Al-Jazeera suggests Qatari independence while the Qatari government pursues an ever-deeper defense relationship with the United States. At the same time, al-Jazeera provides the Qatari government with a tool it can use against Saudi Arabia and other regional rivals, modulating its coverage of issues involving neighboring governments and giving more or less prominence to regime opponents on the air. The genius in Qatar's use of al-Jazeera is not the extent to which

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the channel is a precise tool of policy—it is not—but rather its effectiveness. The station allows the Qatari government to become a significant regional player in its own right while simultaneously permitting a closer relationship to the U.S. military (which enhances Qatar's power as well). Put simply, being host to both al-Jazeera and U.S. Central Command, Qatar was able to “keep summer and winter together in one place,” to borrow the words of the prominent Arab writer Saleh al-Qallab.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Convenient Contradictions***

To be sure, Doha has played an important role in supporting the new order that Washington has been trying to build in Iraq since 2003. Qatar provided Operation Iraqi Freedom with a significant base of logistical support by hosting the U.S. Central Command and the Combined Air Operations Center. It also provided pre-positioning facilities for U.S. tanks and armored personnel carriers. Following the fall of Saddam Hussein, Qatar has pledged \$100 million in aid to Iraq,<sup>32</sup> and made \$5 million in commitments each to the World Bank and UN funds for Iraqi reconstruction—in line with other small Gulf countries.<sup>33</sup> Doha hosted the International Reconstruction Fund Facility donors' conference in May 2004 to review donors' commitments toward total contributions of \$1.024 billion in aid to Iraq's reconstruction.<sup>34</sup> Yet Qatar was not a party to the International Compact with Iraq, a broad multinational effort initiated in the fall of 2006 to create mutual commitments between the Iraqi government and the international donor community that aim “to consolidate peace and pursue political, economic, and social development over the next five years.” Both Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have taken prominent positions in support of the compact.<sup>35</sup>

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Notwithstanding Qatar's contribution to Iraq's reconstruction and the fact that it resumed diplomatic relations with Baghdad's new leaders, there are obvious signs that Doha is not completely comfortable with the new Iraqi order it helped construct. Qatar had learned to live with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. A few years before Operation Iraqi Freedom, Qatar took a leading role in trying to build a regional consensus to lift sanctions from Iraq; in 2000, Qatar advanced proposals for lifting the sanctions in a GCC meeting and again in a meeting for the Damascus Declaration signatory states.<sup>36</sup> The personal dimension of the Iraqi-Qatari relationship was on public display in November 2000, when Saddam Hussein received a Boeing 747 passenger plane as a gift from Sheikh Hamad.<sup>37</sup>

Another strong “channel” that seemed to have linked Qatar with Iraq's former regime is al-Jazeera. Popular al-Jazeera talk show host Faisal al-Qassim was the last journalist to visit Saddam Hussein in September 2002, accompanied by the station's general manager, Muhammad Jasim al-Ali.<sup>38</sup> Jasim was sacked in May 2003, reportedly for his ties to Saddam Hussein.<sup>39</sup> The Iraqi National Congress asserted that documents it had discovered in Baghdad “indicated that al-Ali made clear to Iraqi agents that coverage would favor the Saddam Hussein regime.”<sup>40</sup> In the months following Saddam's fall, reports linked al-Qassim to Saddam Hussein's intelligence apparatus.<sup>41</sup> Even after the fall of Saddam, Doha's relations with elements of the former regime were never cut off completely. In fact, Najib al-Nuaimi, a member of Saddam Hussein's legal defense team, was a former Qatari minister of justice.<sup>42</sup>

Qatar had learned to live uneasily with Saddam's Iraq, and it has learned to live uneasily with his successors. Yet the government has not been shy about its unease over events there, nor sparing in its criticism of U.S. policy. The Qatari foreign minister often complains that Washington has neglected consulting with its GCC allies about its policies in Iraq. He told an audience at the Council on Foreign Relations in September 2005, “We are not the player in [Iraq], and we are not completely consulted, in my opinion. Any Arab countries [that] say they've [been] consulted completely in this situation are not right.”<sup>43</sup> The foreign minister raised the same issue in January 2007, when the United States announced a new strategy in Iraq, complaining that Washington did not “coordinate its policies with the countries of the region.”<sup>44</sup> Some Arab media outlets quoted him as saying that U.S.

policies in Iraq have “caused harm in the region.”<sup>44</sup> On one occasion in 2005, he stated that the U.S. policy of de-Baathification in Iraq was harmful.<sup>45</sup>

Qatars have been prominent defenders of Sunni interests in post-Saddam Iraq. An obvious example is the Egyptian-born Muslim cleric Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who has lived in Qatar for decades and hosts a prominent talk show on al-Jazeera. Qaradawi recently blamed Iran for sectarian strife in Iraq while underscoring the continued suffering of the Sunni community in the country: “Thousands have been killed in Iraq since the Americans entered the country, and Sunnis are the ones suffering most in Iraq. There is an ethnic cleansing going on.”<sup>46</sup> Qatar is also home to Abdul Rahman Al-Omeir Al-Naimi, professor of history at the University of Qatar and a prominent political activist. In his capacity as secretary-general of the “World Campaign for Resistance to Aggression,”<sup>47</sup> he convened in December 2006 an event in Istanbul titled “Conference for the Support of the Iraqi People,” which featured talks by Harith al-Dari, leader of one of the most influential Sunni organizations in Iraq, the Muslim Scholars Association;<sup>48</sup> Adnan Al-Dulaymi, leader of the Iraqi Sunni bloc al-Tawafoq; and, via recorded audio, Ibrahim al-Shammari, alleged spokesperson for the Iraqi insurgent group the Islamic Army in Iraq. The conference, which called in its final communiqué for annulling the current political process in Iraq, the dismantling of militias, and providing support to “the resistance,” was criticized by Iraqi officials for inflaming the sectarian divide in their country.<sup>49</sup> Another Qatari name that has raised concerns inside the leadership circles in the new Iraq is Mohammed Al-Musafar, a well-known writer and a professor of political science at the University of Qatar. Al-Musafar is known for his pro-Saddam leanings and was accused by *Mu’tammar*, the official newspaper of the Iraqi National Congress, of having ties with Iraqi intelligence.<sup>50</sup>

Qatar is also known for providing a safe haven for Iraq’s Baathists after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi community there is thought to number some 900, the most prominent of whom are the former president’s widow, Sajida; his daughter, Halaa; and his grandson.<sup>51</sup> The Web site of the Multinational Force in Iraq claims that Sajida “is a major source of guidance, logistical support, and funding for Iraq’s insurgent leadership. She has established significant connections to individuals directing the insurgency in Iraq and has access to substantial assets stolen by Saddam Hussein.”<sup>52</sup> Former Iraqi foreign minister Naji Sabri Al-Hadithi is currently teaching journalism at a Qatari university. At the annual GCC summit in December 2005, Riad al-Qaysi, a former Baathist Foreign Ministry official, participated in Qatar’s official delegation at the summit. Media outlets reported that Qaysi is currently working as an adviser at the Qatari foreign ministry.<sup>53</sup> The Qatari foreign minister asserts that his country’s hosting of Iraq’s top Baath party members is strictly a humanitarian endeavor and that none of the Baathists that his country hosts has been convicted of any crimes.<sup>54</sup>

With rapidly growing receipts from natural gas and a booming economy, Qatar’s population remains somewhat quiescent, and the regime faces no internal threats. No regional hegemon appears eager to challenge the country, in part because of its skill at co-opting its potential adversaries. Qatar and Iran share a massive gas field—a reserve estimated at 900 trillion cubic feet that experts believe will produce for a century, putting an economic premium on political comity between the two countries. When the United Nations Security Council voted in August 2006 to demand that Iran halt uranium enrichment, Qatar cast the sole dissenting vote.<sup>55</sup>

The war in Iraq has enhanced Qatar’s position, because it has simultaneously allowed the country to deepen its relations with the United States and to assert its pan-Arab bona fides through al-Jazeera’s broadcasts. At the same time, Qatar’s relatively isolated geographic position and its small and largely homogeneous native population mean that instability in Iraq in no way threatens the status quo in the country. The U.S. base is sufficiently far from Doha that it is remote from most Qataris’ daily lives, but it allows the government to deepen its ties with the only country that can provide it with strategic depth against whatever Saudi designs against it exist.

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## The United Arab Emirates

The third type of Iraq–Gulf State relationship is that pursued by the United Arab Emirates, which simultaneously has sought to build its own defensive capacity while deepening ties with a whole range of countries. As such, the UAE's relationship with the United States in terms of military cooperation on Iraq has been almost silent compared with Kuwait's and Qatar's; it is appropriate that the major UAE contribution to the war in Iraq is conjectured to be the basing of surveillance aircraft at Al-Dhafra Air Base outside of Abu Dhabi. Speaking at a press conference in Abu Dhabi in January 2005, U.S. assistant secretary of defense Peter Rodman referred to "good quiet cooperation" between the United States and the UAE, and added, "I don't want to get into the specifics, but we are very pleased at the [military] cooperation that we have."<sup>56</sup>

The UAE has no serious internal political threats. The government is consultative if not democratic, and politics remains highly circumscribed. Each of the seven emirates has a high degree of autonomy, although Abu Dhabi is the dominant force in foreign affairs and defense, and Dubai leads the way in many matters of commerce. Meanwhile, the booming regional economy has improved the lives of most citizens. The UAE has been especially aggressive in providing educational opportunities for its young people, and its native population is small enough that employment has not been a significant problem.

***Although the UAE has a keen interest in Gulf stability, its interest in Iraq is secondary to its concern over Iran, with which it has a long-standing dispute over ownership of three islands in the Gulf: the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, and Abu Musa.***

Although the UAE has a keen interest in Gulf stability, its interest in Iraq is secondary to its concern over Iran, with which it has a long-standing dispute over ownership of three islands in the Gulf: the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, and Abu Musa. Its unresolved dispute with Iran over the islands heightens the UAE's concerns about the rising influence of pro-Iranian Shiites in Iraq.<sup>57</sup> Relations between the UAE and Iran are not unremittingly tense, however. Tens of thousands of Iranians live in Dubai, and billions of dollars of Iranian assets are invested in Emirati businesses and real estate projects. Trade between the two countries is robust and slated to grow—despite the fact that the UAE was a major bankroller of Saddam Hussein in his 1980–1988 war with Iran. Iran policy is an area of some tension among the different emirates. Dubai's commercial interests sometimes dictate a softer policy, while Abu Dhabi's preoccupation with defense—and preserving a close relationship with the United States—dictates a more hawkish policy. The salient fact in the UAE's regional relations, however, is that it pursues a strategy of diverse but quiet partnerships cemented by large amounts of cash. It was a key supporter of the anti-Soviet mujahideen (and, later, the Taliban) in Afghanistan and a booster of senior anti-Saddamist Sunni politicians such as Adnan Pachachi. The UAE also serves as something of a regional refuge: Muhammad Said al-Sahaf, the Iraqi information minister whose increasingly fantastic stories about Iraqi resistance to the Coalition invasion in 2003 made him an object of worldwide ridicule, surfaced after the war in the UAE. The UAE pledged \$215 million in economic and reconstruction assistance to the Iraqi government.<sup>58</sup>

The country is reaching the end of a ten-year, \$15 billion defense modernization program, having contracted for 80 F-16 fighter/attack aircraft from the United States at a cost of \$6.8 billion, an additional 33 Mirage 2000-9 fighter aircraft from France (along with an agreement to upgrade 30 Mirage 2000-5s already in stock), and a full complement of high-tech missiles. In addition, the UAE is seeking a missile defense capacity, has extensive Russian- and French-equipped land forces and is aggressively building a navy that can operate in both the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

The United States remains the UAE's most important military partner, and the two countries formed a Joint Military Commission to facilitate cooperation and joint training. More than a thousand Emiratis train every year in the United States. Meanwhile, Dubai is the busiest foreign port of call for U.S. Navy ships, and intelligence cooperation is reportedly extremely tight. It seems that the United States can get whatever it needs from the UAE; at the same time, the United States has been more forthcoming in supplying sophisticated military equipment to the UAE than to almost any other country.

In pursuance of its U.S. relationship, the UAE offered training on its soil to hundreds of Iraqi troops and police recruits in 2004–2005. Emblematic of the way the UAE government seeks to keep many of these actions sub rosa, much of the training was conducted by German forces on UAE soil, thereby establishing an avenue of participation for an open foe of the war and simultaneously inoculating the UAE from charges that it was complicit in the U.S. military occupation of Iraq. The UAE has sought to be more helpful in Iraq in recent years, hosting the first Preparatory Group Meeting for the International Compact with Iraq in September 2006, and providing funding to both the United Nations' and World Bank's Iraq reconstruction funds. The UAE has avoided being cast as a defender of Sunni interests in Iraq in the way that the government of Saudi Arabia has increasingly been. Instead, the UAE has carved out a niche as a place in the Gulf where people can convene and resolve conflicts with government support.

The political uproar in the United States in early 2006 over Dubai Ports World's efforts to take over a major company operating U.S. ports may have vindicated the UAE's strategy of pursuing a range of relationships and not merely one with the United States. Despite remarkably close defense and intelligence cooperation between the United States and the UAE, the U.S. Congress rallied against the deal, under the charge that it would put Arabs in charge of U.S. port security. The UAE has vigorously expanded its commercial ties to Asia, further balancing against a seemingly mercurial U.S. policy. Dubai, in particular, has sought deep ties to China; bilateral trade is now more than \$10 billion per year, growing at approximately 30 percent per year.<sup>59</sup>

More than any other country in the region, the UAE seeks a broad portfolio of relationships. The United States remains the bedrock of the UAE's security strategy, but the relationship is overlaid with a wide web of complementary relationships built through quiet diplomacy, heightening the utility of the UAE in its current status to all and thereby sustaining its own security.

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## The Allure of Regional Security Frameworks

In the immediate aftermath of the U.S.-led war on Iraq, a number of scholars of Gulf security saw a golden opportunity to create some sort of regional institution that could manage interstate relations. The idea had been floating around for several years, developed most thoroughly in a paper issued by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in 1998.<sup>60</sup> In the paper's expansive conception, such a regional institution would bring together the members of the Arab League, Iran, and Israel, and would seek to boost transparency in military operations, slowly build confidence, and work toward banishing weapons of mass destruction from the region.

At the conclusion of Operation Iraqi Freedom, another consideration came to the fore. Saudis' strong domestic opposition to maintaining U.S. bases in the kingdom was only one sign of how unwelcome the U.S. presence was in the Middle East. Many analysts saw the long-term basing of U.S. troops in the Gulf as a liability, because it had been used in recent years "as a rallying point for both domestic political opposition and terrorist groups, in particular al Qaeda and its associated organizations."<sup>61</sup>

Saddam Hussein's demise and the persistent efforts of Iran's leaders to reduce tensions with its Gulf Arab neighbors led analysts to argue that the existing U.S. security posture was anachronistic, intended to defend against the threat of an invasion that simply was no longer extant. While Gulf oil would remain central to any U.S. strategic concept—the region still holds almost two-thirds of the world's proven reserves—U.S. defense planners believed that the region's security might be served even better by a new collective security structure involving fewer U.S. troops and more dialogue among regional actors. The United States could lighten up on its troop levels and pre-positioning equipment in the Gulf in a dispersed, networked set of bases that could be used for quick and lethal strikes against terrorist threats throughout East Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.<sup>62</sup>

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Regarding regional dialogues, U.S. defense planners believed that if the Arab-Israeli issue were split off from the effort, the fall of Saddam meant that the only outlier was Iran. In addition, the large U.S. troop presence in Iraq would give the United States a clear seat at the table, helping sidestep the issue of precisely defining a role for the United States—the de facto policeman of the region. Analysts argued that the institutionalized cooperation could begin with just the Arab states and the United States, and Iran could be brought in afterward. One advocate of a “Gulf security condominium,” the Brookings Institution’s Kenneth Pollack, suggested in *Foreign Affairs* that, “Inviting Iran to discuss security issues in the Persian Gulf at the same table with the United States would give Tehran the sense that it was finally getting the respect from Washington that it believes it deserves. More to the point, such a process is the only possible way that Iran could affect the military forces of its toughest opponent, the United States.”<sup>63</sup>

With the passage of time, however, such a proposal seems increasingly difficult to realize. First, the idea of Iraq as a peaceful, stabilizing force in the Gulf seems remote. The country’s descent into factional warfare, political squabbling, and sectarian division makes its neighbors wonder whether Iraq will persist at all, rather than what kind of state it might become. Instead, Gulf Arabs complain that the war with Iraq has so weakened the country that it has strengthened Iran, which now has no Arab power to balance it. In addition, the U.S. troop presence in Iraq, which many U.S. planners saw as an uneventful and unexceptional consequence of the U.S.-led liberation of the country, appears increasingly in doubt. Iraq can no longer be a useful node for a lingering U.S. presence in the Gulf; instead, domestic hostility to the U.S. presence—in Iraq and in many of the Gulf States—has heightened concerns about the long-term presence of U.S. troops.

Second, Iran has become far more emboldened under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has abandoned the cautious entreaties to the West of his predecessor, Mohamed Khatami. Whereas Khatami spoke of a “Dialogue of Civilizations” and mutual respect that resonated with elites in the West, Iran, and the Arab world, his successor is a populist who seeks to portray his defiance of the West and the United Nations as evidence of his courage in the face of superior military might. Not only has Ahmadinejad pressed toward crisis with the United States and Europe by insisting on Iran’s right to enrich uranium, but he has also made the issue a cause célèbre among the Iranian populace in the nation’s quest for international respect backed by the prospect of a nuclear arsenal. Even Western diplomats who favor engagement with Iran concede that “[t]here can no longer be any reasonable doubt that Iran’s ambition is to obtain nuclear weapons capability.”<sup>64</sup> Yet the Iranian public continues to follow the government line that Western efforts amount not to prosecution but, rather, *persecution* over small technical reporting errors in a peaceful research program that Iranian engineers have corrected.

Adding to the inauspiciousness of a U.S. presence, America’s standing in the Middle East is perhaps at its lowest point since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Ongoing chaos in Iraq, the growing immiseration of Palestinians under what many Arabs see as a U.S.-led embargo of the Palestinian Authority, and a seemingly unsteady push for democratization in the Middle East have made even many of America’s friends wonder about U.S. intentions and capacity. One U.S.-educated Arab living in Lebanon recently appealed to President George Bush and then Prime Minister Tony Blair to consider the legacy of past U.S. and British actions in the Middle East “and find a better way to do this modernity stuff so that it does not routinely kill our people, collapse our governments, and shatter our societies.”<sup>65</sup>

***Where consensus exists among Arab governments on a U.S. presence, it centers on proposals for a shared air missile defense; early warning; and command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) capacity, which would presumably provide protection from Iranian strikes.***

Where consensus exists among Arab governments on a U.S. presence, it centers on proposals for a shared air missile defense; early warning; and command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) capacity, which would presumably provide protection from Iranian strikes. Such an initiative would be reactive rather than preventive, however, and it would serve to highlight the failure of efforts to create joint forces that could protect GCC countries from outside attack, such as the Peninsula Shield force or the stillborn Damascus Declaration forces of the early 1990s, in which Gulf troops would be supplemented by those of Egypt and Syria.

Yet the current tensions plaguing the Middle East highlight mostly concerns about—not prospects for—the future of Gulf security. With little agreement on either the threats or mechanisms to address them, the United States seems drawn ineluctably into a long-term security presence that in many ways it is seeking to shed. At the same time, Gulf Arab publics are becoming increasingly hostile to that presence, while their governments find themselves on the horns of a dilemma—wanting U.S. security against regional threats, but fearing the effects of a close bilateral security relationship. It is an environment in which all feel uncertain about how to move.

Writing almost twenty years ago, Stephen Walt observed that threats were a far better determinant of alliance-formation behavior than power, ideology, or some other motivating factor.<sup>66</sup> In 1981, the Gulf States banded together in the Gulf Cooperation Council to help create a bulwark against Iran. Iraq's aggressive behavior toward many of its neighbors led them into close alliances with the United States, and emerging threats from Iran in the postwar environment have helped solidify their orientation. Indeed, one of the key surprises of the post-Cold War Middle East is that the demise of the Soviet Union has driven virtually every government in the region into the arms of the United States to guard against the advances of budding regional hegemons or internal opposition, at the same time that events on the ground—and their coverage in regional media—have bred more hostility among broad publics than at any time since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

These alliances, however, are uneasy ones, borne of necessity and often kept out of the public eye. There are two ironies in all of this. The first is that a driving factor behind the U.S. decision to go to war against Iraq was to protect these countries from a persistent Iraqi threat, yet they have generally adopted a passive role toward shaping the post-Saddam environment in Iraq. The second—and even more ironic—is that Iraq's demise has created opportunities for Iran, which these same governments see as a rising threat from which they seek U.S. protection. Saddam Hussein's fall did not alter these countries' relations with the United States; instead, it merely shifted anxieties and grimly underscored the few alternatives they have to pursuing strong bilateral relations.

The problem is, in some ways, a more pressing one for the United States, because it has more options available. Whereas Gulf Arab states have few alternatives other than to seek external guarantors of regional security—and no country or group of countries can provide nearly the degree of security that the United States can—how the United States projects its forces in the region, what kinds of guarantees it seeks, and what kinds of threats it offers protection against are all very much in the realm of its own decision making.

Of course, one or more of the Arab Gulf states could seek an accommodation with Iran—a move that could stem from the fear that the United States was being too belligerent or out of the satisfaction that Iran was becoming less so. In so doing, that state (or states) would probably not go firmly into the Iranian camp (as Syria has done) but, rather, seek to build ties with both the neighbor who will never go away and the protector who might.

This is not to say that GCC governments seek a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement. One writer close to many GCC defense ministries observed recently that while resolution of U.S.-Iranian tensions would be welcomed in Washington, Iran's neighbors fear a return to a warm U.S.-Iranian security relationship that would involve "subjugation to the foreign-policy whims of a hegemonic Iran rather than a balance of interests between equal sovereign states."<sup>67</sup>

What seems clear from the foregoing is that these smaller Gulf states are "market takers" rather than "market makers" on regional security issues. Deeply affected as many of them were by Iraqi threats, in the aftermath of war they have shown little inclination to shape the nature of a larger and potentially more powerful neighbor. The choices they face are more immediate: how to calibrate a proper relationship with the United States and how many other relationships to maintain alongside it. As traditional monarchies, all three states examined in this report are well accustomed to building broad and sometimes incoherent coalitions to maintain power.

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These three states have taken different approaches to meet their own security needs, seeking different degrees of identity with U.S. interests and actions. Yet although these countries share many threat perceptions with the United States, it would be a mistake to overstate the commonality of interests. Although the United States made a vibrant and independent Iraq a high priority on its international agenda, none of these countries shared that ambition; their response since has borne out their uncertainty about the enterprise. One might argue that the United States was too ambitious in its goals for Iraq and that these governments have, at the same time, been too modest in theirs. In short, they have sought protection from their strategic environment, not the chance to shape it.

## Notes

1. A July 2002 news report stated that U.S. administration officials said that most Arab countries would support an invasion of Iraq, although they would probably publicly disavow any such support; see "U.S. Plans Massive Invasion of Iraq," United Press International, July 11, 2002. (An online copy of the story is available on NewsMax.com, [www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/7/10/174300.shtml](http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/7/10/174300.shtml)).
2. The White House, "President Bush's Address to the American Enterprise Institute, February 26, 2003," [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html).
3. Michael Scott Doran, "Palestine, Iraq, and American Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2003, 33.
4. R. James Woolsey, address to the conference on "Americans for Victory over Terrorism," University of California, Los Angeles, April 2, 2003, [www.avot.org/article/20030402154900.html](http://www.avot.org/article/20030402154900.html).
5. Established in May 1981, the GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
6. See Jon B. Alterman, "Not in My Backyard: Iraq's Neighbors' Interests," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2003, 149–60.
7. For example, in January 2007, Qatar's foreign minister described U.S. policies in Iraq as "harmful for the region"; see "Qatar: Siyasat amrika alhaqat dararan bil-mantiqa (U.S. Policies Caused Harm in the Region)," *Al-Qabas* (Kuwait City), January 15, 2007, 52. A GCC foreign minister told Middle East scholar and author John Duke Anthony, "We have shared our views with American officials and policymakers as to why we think what they have been doing toward Iran, Iraq, and Palestine is misguided and won't work. They listened to us but in the end they disagreed"; see John Duke Anthony, "Through a Looking Glass Darkly: Perspective of the U.S.-Gulf Relationship with the Benefit of Hindsight from the Year Before," Saudi-U.S. Relations Information Service, Washington, D.C., December 16, 2006, [www.saudi-us-relations.org/fact-book/documents/2006/061214-anthony-us-gcc-relationship.pdf](http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/fact-book/documents/2006/061214-anthony-us-gcc-relationship.pdf).
8. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2d ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2004), 110.
9. Author's interview with a Kuwaiti academic, Kuwait City, April 23, 2006.
10. Author's interview with a Kuwaiti journalist, Kuwait City, April 24, 2006.
11. "Kuwait, Iraq Agree to Resume Full Diplomatic Relations," People's Daily Online, August 3, 2004, [http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200408/03/eng20040803\\_151640.html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200408/03/eng20040803_151640.html); "Iraqis Hold in High Esteem Kuwaiti Amir, State, People—Talabani," Kuwait News Agency, January 20, 2007, [www.kuna.net.kw/home/story.aspx?Language=en&DSNO=944286](http://www.kuna.net.kw/home/story.aspx?Language=en&DSNO=944286).
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## USIP and Iraq

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